

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 9, 2009

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to express our concerns regarding the completion of security fencing and accompanying infrastructure along the U.S.-Mexico border. Recent reports about escalating border violence and increased narcotics production in Mexico underscore the significant challenges we face on our Southern land border. In light of these reports, we urge you to expeditiously complete existing fence construction projects required by law and consider building additional infrastructure wherever needed.

According to a recent analysis by the Department of State, Mexico remains one of the largest producers of illegal narcotics entering the country, particularly in the categories of marijuana, opium and heroin. The increased production of these substances and the growing influence of drug cartels in Mexico – a force that is estimated to consist of more than 100,000 individuals -- continue to present a serious threat to the safety of communities and law enforcement on both sides of the border.

In fact, just over the past year, border violence is responsible for more than 7,000 deaths. More than 1,000 of these deaths occurred in January of this year alone. Comparatively, there have been roughly 600 reported deaths in both Iraq and Afghanistan in the first two months of 2009 due to ongoing insurgent activity -- 63 of which were U.S. military personnel.

The severity of this situation requires that we take immediate action to secure our Southern land border, starting with the completion of fence projects mandated under the Secure Fence Act (P.L. 109-367). While more than 600 miles of pedestrian fencing and vehicle barriers have been constructed so far, it is our understanding that nearly 70 miles of infrastructure, designated for specific areas that are susceptible to significant cross-border traffic, remains uncompleted.

In areas where construction has been unnecessarily delayed, the REAL ID Act (P.L. 109-13) provides the Secretary of Homeland Security with the authority to waive any legal requirements that impede the construction of border security barriers. Given this authority, in addition to the requirement for at least 700 miles of border infrastructure, we request that you take immediate action to finish the 70 miles of uncompleted fence construction projects. We urge you to also consider expanding this infrastructure to other areas of the border that continue to experience the effects of increased border violence.

Mr. President, we recognize that creating an enforceable border will require a combination of barriers, technology and personnel, and that infrastructure alone will not put Mexico's drug cartels out of business. Contiguous fencing, however, is an effective and proven enforcement mechanism that will serve to directly reduce cross-border traffic and drug violence by closing the smuggling corridors exploited by drug cartels.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Securing our borders must be among our top priorities and we look forward to working with you in this effort.

Sincerely,

Brian P. Bittany

W. J. B. Bittany

Patrick Bittany

Marsha Blackburn

Doug Lamborn

Phil Pinyan

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